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ABSTRACT

A computerized attendance system is presented that includes immediate access to attendance records and allows same-day notification to parents of a child's absence. The system, used at Carson City High School (Nevada), is broken down into five chronological steps, generating several possible attendance updates during the day: (1) compiling a first-period attendance list, (2) entering absences into the computer and calling parents to confirm absences, (3) reporting possible truants on a "hot list" sent to the office during periods by classroom teachers, (4) notifying parents about possible truancies, and (5) requiring an admit slip when a student returns from an absence. Printouts of absence lists for an individual class and for the entire school are included, as are samples of a first-period absence form, a "hot list," and an admit slip. Two appendixes present Carson City High's tardy policy and a flow chart of the computerized attendance system. (JW)

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Computerizing Your Attendance System

by

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March, 1983

Presented at the Annual
Meeting of the National
Association of Secondary
School Principals, Dallas,
Texas, February 4-8, 1983.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the major concerns of most contemporary high schools is student attendance. Each year the Gallup Poll of Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools cite truancy or poor student attendance as one of the biggest problems with which public schools must deal. The necessity of an effective attendance system for the modern secondary school exists nationally. The system cited is in actual operation and at Carson City High School, in Carson City, Nevada, and has proven successful in deterring truants and dramatically increasing student attendance.

The requirements of an effective attendance program include accurate and up-dated information regarding a student's attendance record, a quick retrieval system to access such information, and same day notification to parents of a child's absence. A computerized attendance program utilizing a desk-top computer can readily supply such information and may be a solution to your school's attendance problem. A simple five-step attendance procedure in conjunction with a desk-top computer provides accurate, period by period attendance, so that parents and school officials can be quickly notified of a student's attendance record. Cited is a detailed description of the process, and for convenience, the process is summarized in Chart I.

Five Step Attendance Procedure

Step I First period attendance is taken by the classroom teacher and the first period absences are reported to the Attendance Office.

In this system, the first period attendance reporting is the key to the system. Any attendance system is only as accurate as the record keeping of the individual classroom teacher. Emphasis should be given to the methods utilized by the first period teacher to insure accurate information is supplied to the Attendance Office. It should be noted that under this system, all students are required to attend first period. Many schools do not have this requirement, but require all students to attend second period, homeroom, etc. It does not matter which period is utilized, but one period must be chosen to establish attendance reporting to the office.

All students are assigned a five-digit student number when registering into school. When absences are reported, the teacher reports the name of the student and his number. The number is what is actually inputted into the computer.

First period student absences are reported to the Attendance Office on a form illustrated in Figure 1. This form is due to the Attendance Office no earlier than fifteen minutes after the first period has started and no later than twenty-five minutes after the first period has started. The early deadline is established to insure that students who are tardy to first period are not counted as absent. A policy was established that if a student is tardy by more than 15 minutes into a period, he/she is considered truant for that period. The twenty-five minute time limit was implemented to insure that the computer operator has enough time to input the names (actually numbers) into the computer, so that the lists in Step II can be generated by the end of first period.

FIGURE 1

The form is titled "FIRST PERIOD ABSENCE LIST" in a large, bold, sans-serif font, centered within a circular sunburst graphic. Below the title is a table with two columns: "Teacher" and "Date". The table has 10 rows, numbered 1 through 10 on the left side. The rows are empty, providing space for recording student names and dates.

	Teacher	Date
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		

FIGURE 2

TEACHER'S NAME

ROOM A2

-----SEND IN A HOT-LIST FOR ABSENT STUDENTS NOT LISTED BELOW-----

ABSENCES FOR Thu Feb 3 34th day of 1983

2ND PERIOD
CLABET KIMBERLY
GRANITE MARY
PINE TREVA
SLABY ROBERT
VINCI CARL

3RD PERIOD
TRUDY BETTY
PETERSON JUNE
ROSS PETER
WRIGHT HEATHER

4TH PERIOD
SMITH JOE
COOKE ELINOR
JONES JIM
MCNUTT TERRIE

5TH PERIOD
BACKWOOD SUSAN
OARMAN LANCE

6TH PERIOD

7TH PERIOD
RUTHER STEVE
SMITH TONY
FINSSEN ANN
YATES DON

FIGURE 3

ABSENCES FOR TUE FEB 1 32TH DAY OF 1983
 171 STUDENTS ABSENT=8.52443 %
 0 = 0 % FRESHMEN, 44 = 8.13309 % SOPHOMORES,
 79 = 15.8317 % JUNIORS, 48 = 10.5495 % SENIORS
 62 CLUSTER I, 42 CLUSTER II,
 67 CLUSTER III

	FR	SO	JR	SR
CLUSTER I		18	28	16
CLUSTER II		12	21	9
CLUSTER III		14	30	23

31009 .. ANGELIC ROSE	555-7978	777-5485
42018 .. BARGE JOHN	555-1232	777-4443
43030 .. BENSER HENRY	555-3343	777-4545
33044 .. BREWER SHARON	555-8889	777-5432
23056 .. CLAREY JANE	555-1222	777-4356
23066 .. DOWNEY MARY	555-1443	777-4327
23344 .. EPLEY JON	554-9999	778-2389
33475 .. WILLIAMS MONTE	554-1234	773-8765
44378 .. VANCE BUTCH	N/A	798-6654
34788 .. YATE MARY	554-4311	N/A

Step II First period absences are inputted into the desk-top computer to generate the following lists:

1. Individual teacher absence list - This printout provides each teacher the names, by period, of all his/her students who will be absent for the remainder of the day. This list is provided to the teacher by the beginning of the second period. Please see Figure 2 for an example of this listing.

2. Student-wide daily absence list - This printout provides a listing of all students in the school who are absent that day. The listing also includes the parent's home and work phone numbers. This list is provided to the Attendance Office toward the end of the first period. The Attendance Office clerk calls home to verify student absences. Please see Figure 3 for an example of this listing.

Step III

Each period after the first period (periods 2-7), the teacher reviews his/her individualized absence list. If a student is not in class and his/her name does not appear on the absence list, the teacher then notifies the Attendance Office via the "Hot List." A copy of the Hot List form is illustrated on Figure 4.

One of the main features of this system is that a student who is absent from school for the entire day is only reported to the office one time (first period). He/she is not reported six times! After first period the only student's absences that are reported to the office are those students who were in first period, but did not attend class during a later period in the day. The efficiency of such a system is that the Attendance Office, after first period, is only dealing with truants; and thus, parents can be notified quickly, usually in the same period the student is truant. The Hot List is due to the Attendance Office between fifteen and twenty minutes after the period started. This is to ensure that tardies are not reported on the Hot List.

Tardies are not handled by the Attendance Office. Tardies are the responsibility of the classroom teacher. The tardy policy of Carson City High School is outlined in Appendix A.

FIGURE 4

HOT LIST!

DATE _____

TEACHER _____

PERIOD **2 3 4 5 6 7**

	LAST NAME	FIRST	GRADE
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			

Step IV

Upon receiving the "Hot List," the Attendance Office clerk immediately calls the parents notifying them of their son's or daughter's possible truancy.

If parents do not know where their child is that period, a conference is held with the student, parents, and dean the following morning. This step ensures immediate notification of parents if the student is absent. This step is the key to catching truants. This practice provides for early intervention with the parents, school official, and student.

Step V

Upon returning to school from an absence (day or period), all students are required to report to the Attendance Office for an admit slip. Please see Figure 5 for an illustration of the admit slip.

All students are labeled as truant when initially reported by their first period teacher. As absences are verified by phone or admit slip, the student's attendance record in the computer is changed. This daily up-dating of a student's attendance record is usually done after school and takes less than half an hour.

No student is to be admitted back into class without an admit slip. This is to ensure that if a student has "beaten the system" or if a teacher has not notified the office of a student's absence, the admit slip will serve as a back-up system to identify the student's absence.

FIGURE 5

CARSON CITY HIGH SCHOOL
ADM'T SLIP

NAME: _____

GRADE: 10 11 12

EXCUSED

TRUANT

DATE _____ ALL 1 2 3 4 5 6

DATE _____ ALL 1 2 3 4 5 6

DATE _____ ALL 1 2 3 4 5 6

812-081

CHART I

Computerizing Your Attendance System

- Step I First period attendance taken by classroom teacher and first period absences are reported to the Attendance Office
- Step II First period absences inputed into the computer to generate the following lists:
1. Individual teacher absence list - This printout provides each teacher with a listing of all of his/her students, by period, that will be absent that day.
 2. School-wide daily absence list - This printout provides a listing of all the students in the school who are absent that day. The Attendance Office staff call home to verify absences.
- Step III Each period (periods 2-7) the teacher reviews his/her individualized absence list. If a student is not in class and his/her name does not appear on the absence list, the Teacher then notifies the Attendance Office via the Hot List.
- Step IV Upon receiving the Hot List, the Attendance Office immediately calls home notifying parents of possible truancy.
1. If parents do not know where their child is that period, a conference is held with the student, parents, and dean the following morning.
- Step V Upon returning to school from an absence (day or period), all students are required to report to the Attendance Office for an admit slip.
1. Data obtained from admit slip is inputed into the computer to up-date students' attendance record.
 2. All students are labeled as truant when first reported. As absences are verified by phone call or admit slip, student's attendance record is changed.

The Computer System

The actual computer system is diagrammed in Figure 6. The actual system consists of the following equipment with an approximate cost of each item.

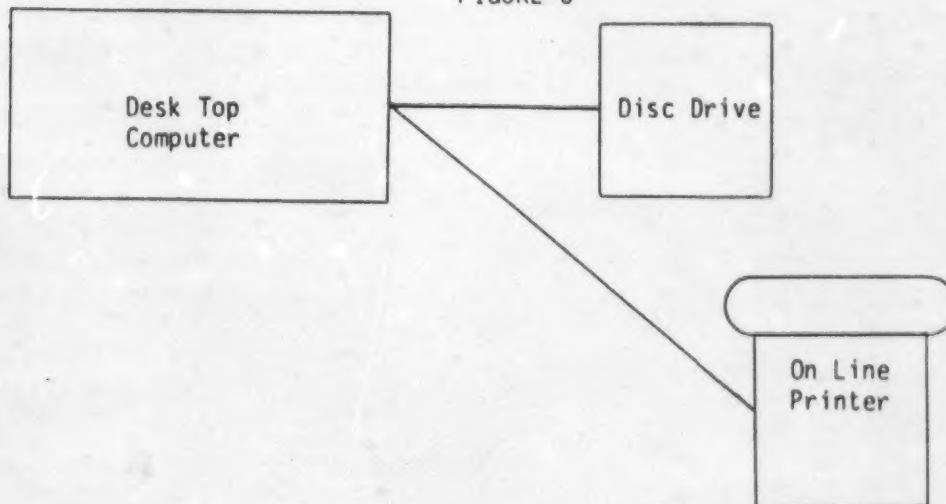
TRS-80 Model II (64K)	.\$3499.00 (List)
One Drive Expansion System.	.\$1150.00 (List)
Line Printer.	.\$1860.00 (List)

(Usually school districts receive a 20% educational discount-not included in above figures.)

TOTAL	\$5207.20 (With 20% discount)
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While the TRS-80 Model II was chosen for this system, several desk-top computers will prove satisfactory. The system requires a computer with a 64K memory, a dual disk drive, and a line printer to type the lists.

FIGURE 6



In Conclusion . . .

A flow chart of the actual computerized attendance system is listed in Appendix B. The attendance system is successful because parents are notified early and intervention by the school is immediate. The forms generated have been accepted as actual records suitable for attendance accounting and provide a useful and workable record of a student's attendance pattern.

No system is impossible to break. You can expect to have problems, mostly human error, for several months after you institute a computerized system. You will probable notice, during the first weeks, that there is an increase in the number of absences. There is no actual increase; however, you are now getting a very accurate accounting of student absences. Once the initial problems are solved, this system should provide you an effective method to monitor student's attendance.

The actual computer program is not listed in this guide, since the program is constantly being modified to meet new attendance requirements and to increase efficiency. If you are interested in obtaining this program, please contact:

Carson City High School
c/o Principal's Office
P. O. Box 603
Carson City, NV 89701
(702) 885-6500

APPENDIX A

Tardy Policy

1. Any student arriving to school tardy is to check in at the Attendance Office and then report to class.
2. Students who pick up admit slips after first period has begun will be considered tardy to first period.
3. Students may come to the office for attendance reasons during the following intervals; in the morning prior to first period, during their lunch, and after school.
4. Ten (10) tardies in any class per semester (as indicated by the teacher's rollbook) will constitute a truancy and/or suspension and assignment to the Alternative Learning School (ALS).

Computerizing Your Attendance System

